

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----101829Z 109816 /46

P R 101759Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6371
INFO USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 04324

EXDIS

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS ACTION TO SECDEF AND INFO TO
USNMR SHAPE, CINC EUR VAIHINGEN AND CINC USAF RAMSTEIN.

SECDEF FOR SECRETARY BROWN

MILITARY ADDEES TREAT AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MPOL, NATO, AWACS, MILI, GW
SUBJECT: THE ATMOSPHERE IN BONN AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE
LEBER DEPARTS FOR WASHINGTON

REF: BONN 03618 DTG 281845Z FEB 77 (NOTAL)

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE CURRENT ATMOSPHERE IN BONN ON
POLITICAL-MILITARY MATTERS, AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE LEBER
PREPARES TO DEPART FOR HIS MARCH 15 MEETING WITH
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE BROWN, IS HEAVY. THE USG-FRG
RELATIONSHIP HAS BEEN BEDEVILED BY SERIOUS DIFFERENCES
OF OPINION ON TWO MAJOR POLITICAL-MILITARY ISSUES:
NATO AWACS AND THE TANK PROBLEM. WHILE LEBER'S VISIT
MAY NOT RESOLVE THESE LATTER TWO ISSUES, WE WOULD HOPE IT
CAN AT LEAST DISPERSE SOME OF THE CURRENT ACRIMONY AND
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ALLOW CONSIDERATION OF THOSE PROBLEMS IN THE NORMAL USG/
FRG COOPERATIVE SPIRIT. END SUMMARY.

1. OFFICERS CURRENTLY DEALING WITH POLITICAL-MILITARY
AFFAIRS IN EMBASSY BONN HAVE DIFFICULTY IN RECALLING A
TIME WHEN THE ATMOSPHERE IN THE DEFENSE MINISTRY AND
THOSE SECTIONS OF THE FOREIGN OFFICE DEALING WITH

DEFENSE MATTERS WAS SO POOR. MOREOVER, PRESS TREATMENT OF DEFENSE ISSUES REFLECTS THIS DISCONTENT. ONE ASPECT OF THE PROBLEM LIES IN GERMAN RESENTMENT OVER WHAT THEY CONSIDER TO BE THE U.S. "HARD SELL" FOR A NATO AWACS. THE MORE IMPORTANT ELEMENT, HOWEVER, IS THE SMOULDERING RESENTMENT OVER THE XM-1/LEOPARD II TANK COMPETITION. U.S. NEWSPAPER REPORTS SUCH AS THE HEADLINE IN THE MARCH 9 "STARS AND STRIPES" -- "GERMAN TANK RATED LOW BY U.S. ARMY EXPERTS HAVE CAUSED THIS RESENTMENT TO BURN BRIGHTER.

2. ALL MAJOR NEWSPAPERS IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC CARRIED THE AP STORY ON WHICH THE "STARS AND STRIPES" STORY WAS BASED IN THEIR MARCH 9 EDITION ALONG WITH A FEDERAL MINISTRY OF DEFENSE DENIAL THAT THE COMPARISON BETWEEN THE XM-1 AND THE LEOPARD II HAD SHOWN THE GERMAN TANK TO BE INFERIOR. THE DEFENSE MINISTRY'S DENIAL WAS LOW KEY, POINTING OUT THAT THE U.S. AND THE FRG BUILT TANKS TO MEET DIFFERING MILITARY CONCEPTS AND REQUIREMENTS WHICH MUST AFFECT ATTEMPTS AT COMPARISON.

3. WHILE THE DEFENSE MINISTRY'S ANNOUNCEMENT DID NOT INDULGE IN POLEMICS, DEFENSE MINISTRY AND FOREIGN OFFICE OFFICIALS REACTED BADLY TO THE WASHINGTON STORY. THEY OBVIOUSLY FEEL THAT IT WAS A DELIBERATE LEAK ON THE PART OF THE U.S. ARMY AND RESENT IT ACCORDINGLY. IN FRANCE, FOREIGNERS DON'T DENIGRATE FRENCH COOKING; IN BRITAIN, FOREIGNERS DON'T CAST ASPERSIONS ON THE QUEEN'S VIRTUE; AND IN GERMANY, FOREIGNERS DON'T DECRY GERMAN TANK
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PROWESS.

4. EVEN BEFORE THE APPEARANCE OF THE STORY IN THE AMERICAN PRESS, THE GERMAN NEWS MEDIA HAD KEPT UP A STEADY STREAM OF ARTICLES ALLEGING THE U.S. WAS UNWILLING TO PURCHASE A "SUPERIOR" GERMAN TANK JUST BECAUSE IT WAS GERMAN. THIS FEELING WAS SHARED EVEN BY KNOWLEDGEABLE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. IT IS UNUSUAL FOR GERMAN OFFICIALS VERBALLY TO ATTACK AMERICAN DIPLOMATS FOR U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY BUT RECENTLY IT HAS BEEN ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO ENTER INTO A DISCUSSION OF DEFENSE ISSUES WITHOUT REFERENCE BEING MADE TO THE USG'S "RENEGING" ON ITS AGREEMENT TO EQUIP THE XM-1 TANK WITH THE GERMAN 120MM SMOOTH BORE CANNON.

5. THE GERMAN MEDIA ACCOUNTS HAVE BEEN REPEATING MANY

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED ABOVE ADDEES

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EXDIS

OF THE POINTS MADE BY CDU DEFENSE SPOKESMAN WOERNER (REFTEL). AS IN THE CASE OF THE WOERNER STATEMENT, THESE ARTICLES OFTEN EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT THE FRG SHOULD REFUSE TO PARTICIPATE IN A NATO AWACS PROGRAM AS LONG AS THE U.S. REFUSES TO MAKE NATO STANDARDIZATION A "TWO-WAY STREET." PRESS TREATMENT OF AWACS HAS BY NO MEANS BEEN LIMITED TO THE ALLEGED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THAT WEAPONS SYSTEM AND THE TANK ISSUE. INSTEAD, A SERIES OF ARTICLES HAS APPEARED EXPRESSING DOUBTS THAT A NATO AWACS WOULD BE WORTH THE MONEY IT WOULD COST.

6. A TYPICAL EXAMPLE OF THIS WAS A SERIES OF ARTICLES WRITTEN BY CHRISTIAN POYTKA AND APPEARING IN THE "SUEDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG" (INDEPENDENT LIBERAL). MR. POYTKA CLAIMED TO BE QUOTING FROM A NATO AWACS STUDY PREPARED BY THE OFFICE OF FMOD STATE SECRETARY SCHNELL WHICH ALLEGED THAT PARTICIPATION IN AWACS WOULD COST MORE THAN THE PURCHASE OF 1,000 LEOPARD II TANKS OR MORE THAN 100 MRCA AIRCRAFT. POYTKA WENT ON TO CLAIM THAT "HARDLY ANY MILITARY OFFICIAL IS PREPARED TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUCH A LOSS OF TANKS OR AIRCRAFT."

7. THIS DENIGRATION OF AWACS HAS ALL THE EARMARKS OF STEMMING FROM DELIBERATE LEAKS BY OFFICERS IN THE FMOD
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WHO ARE OPPOSED TO FRG PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAM BECAUSE IT WOULD RESULT IN THE POSTPONEMENT OR ABANDONMENT OF THE PROCUREMENT OF OTHER WEAPONS WHICH THESE INDIVIDUALS FEEL SHOULD HAVE A HIGHER PRIORITY. WE DOUBT IF MINISTER LEBER HIMSELF IS BEHIND THIS CAMPAIGN, SINCE, AS WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, HE IS ONE OF THE FEW PEOPLE IN THE DEFENSE MINISTRY WHO APPEAR TO SUPPORT THE PROGRAM. AT THE SAME TIME, LEBER CANNOT IGNORE OPPOSITION TO AWACS WITHIN THE GERMAN ARMED SERVICES. NOR CAN HE IGNORE AN IMPORTANT OPPOSITION POLITICAL FIGURE LIKE WOERNER. THE FACT THAT THE GERMAN PRESS HAS TAKEN UP THE MATTER IN SUCH TRIDENT FASHION FURTHER COMPLICATES HIS PROBLEM.

8. WE BELIEVE THAT LEBER HIMSELF HAS BEEN OPPOSED TO ANYTHING SO CRASS AS TO MAKE GERMAN PARTICIPATION IN A NATO AWACS PROGRAM DEPENDENT UPON THE U.S. ACCEPTANCE OF THE 120MM GERMAN SMOOTH BORE CANNON FOR THE XM-1. HOWEVER, THE POLITICAL PRESSURES ON HIM ARE GROWING, AND PEOPLE CLOSE TO LEBER TELL US THAT THEY BELIEVE THE GERMAN PARLIAMENTARY MOOD ON STANDARDIZATION HAS WORSENERED TO SUCH A POINT THAT LEBER SIMPLY CANNOT UNDERTAKE OBLIGATIONS PERCEIVED AS UNILATERAL WITHOUT INCURRING GRAVE POLITICAL RISKS. NONETHELESS, THE PEOPLE AROUND LEBER ALSO EXPRESS CONFIDENCE THAT HIS WASHINGTON VISIT WILL BE A SUCCESS AND THAT PROGRESS CAN BE MADE ON OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS.
STOESSEL

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED

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